

**LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & FISHERIES**  
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Waterfowl Population Estimates  
in Louisiana's Coastal Zone Below  
U.S. Highway 90 and on Catahoula Lake

Date: Coastal Zone: Sept. 8-10, 2008  
Catahoula Lake: Sept. 10, 2008

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September 12, 2008

Pilot: B. Dorsa

Estimates made from Aircraft (\*\*) Estimate less than 1,000

SPECIES	SOUTHWEST	SOUTHEAST	CATAHOULA LAKE	TOTALS
MALLARD	**			0
MOTTLED	28,000	6,000		34,000
GADWALL				0
WIGEON				0
GW TEAL				0
BW TEAL	444,000	13,000		457,000
SHOVELER	1,000	**		1,000
PINTAIL				0
TOTAL DABBLERS	473,000	19,000	-	492,000
SCAUP				0
RINGNECKED				0
CANVASBACK				0
TOTAL DIVERS	0	0	-	0
TOTAL DUCKS	473,000	19,000	-	492,000
COOTS	**			0

**COMMENTS:**

The 492,000 blue-winged teal estimated on this survey is much higher than in 2007 (249,000), the 5-year average (263,000), and the long-term average (252,000). The overwhelming majority of blue-wings were counted in the shallow-flooded agricultural areas north of the marsh in southwest

Louisiana. Over 90% of the blue-wings estimated in this region of the state were in agricultural lands versus marsh. The distribution was highly clumped with a few large concentrations of teal accounting for most of the estimate. Concentrations were noted from north of Lacassine NWR east to Abbeville, primarily in harvested rice-fields.

Very few blue-wings were seen in southeast Louisiana and none were seen at Catahoula Lake. The 13,000 estimated in southeast Louisiana on this survey is lower than the 21,000 last September, the 42,000 in 2006, and is the lowest number of teal in this region since the September waterfowl survey was resumed in 1992. Traditionally important habitats were affected by hurricane Gustav as very high, turbid water, wind-blown debris, and scoured and salt-water scalded marsh vegetation were evident on all survey lines from Morgan City east. Rainfall associated with hurricane Gustav flooded Catahoula Lake over 10 feet above pre-storm levels, and no ducks were seen on this important early-season habitat. Observers flew the nearby agricultural fields and saw about 1,000 blue-wings.

The estimated 34,000 mottled ducks is similar to last year's estimate but is lower than the 5-year average (41,000). It is the lowest estimate since the 20,000 estimated in 2002.

Habitat conditions look generally good in the marshes of southwest Louisiana with good growth of submerged aquatics in most locations. Seed-producing annual vegetation is reduced from the bumper crops in 2006 and 2007 but was evident in many locations. No damage from hurricane Gustav was evident, but hurricane Ike is threatening this area with a storm surge estimated to be comparable to hurricane Rita in 2005. Impacts of the next few days will likely alter habitat conditions substantially. In southeast Louisiana, there was obvious loss of submerged aquatic and emergent vegetation as well as salt-water impacts of remaining vegetation in many locations. Extremely high water levels made it impossible to be more specific, and the storm surge from hurricane Ike has increased those water levels further. High river-stages and widespread flooding is reported in central and north Louisiana, with associated crop losses. The September waterfowl survey does not include those areas, so impacts on distribution of teal at this time or fall waterfowl habitat are currently unknown.